

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figure 1. Specifically, Figure 1 has been amended to specifically point out the large diameter portion (7a) and the small diameter portion (7b) of the insertion hole (7). No new matter has been added.

Attachments: Replacement Sheet

Annotated Sheet Showing Changes

REMARKS

Applicant concurrently files herewith a Petition for Extension of Time, and corresponding extension of time fee, for a three-month extension of time.

Claims 1-12, 14-17 and 19-21 are all of the claims presently pending in the application. Claims 1, 5-10, 14, 17, 19 and 20 have been amended to more clearly define the claimed invention. Claims 13 and 18 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

It is noted that the claim amendments are made only for more particularly pointing out the invention, and not for distinguishing the invention over the prior art, narrowing the claims or for any statutory requirements of patentability. Further, Applicant specifically states that no amendment to any claim herein should be construed as a disclaimer of any interest in or right to an equivalent of any element or feature of the amended claim.

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1-8, 12-14 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ueno (U.S. Patent No. 5,846,040), Anderson (U.S. Patent No. 5,286,152) or Pliml Jr. (U.S. Patent No. 6,324,731). Claims 1-8, 12-14 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by LeVey (U.S. Patent No. 6,045,309). Claims 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over LeVey, Pliml, Anderson or Ueno.

These rejections are respectfully traversed in the following discussion.

I. THE CLAIMED INVENTION

The claimed invention of exemplary claim 1, provides a jointing member including a plurality of rib walls formed on an outer periphery of the shaft portion, the plurality of rib walls engaging the plurality of slits (e.g., see Application at Figures 2A-7). This feature is important for preventing a worker from erroneously pushing the tip end of the shaft portion of the pin while the worker performs another procedure or the corner portion of another part

is abutted against the tip end of the shaft portion of the pin (see Application at page 13, lines 9-19).

II. ELECTION OF SPECIES/RESTRICTION

In the Office Action dated June 21, 2006, the Examiner points out that the Specification refers to a “first invention”, a “second invention”, a “third invention”, a “fourth invention”, a “fifth invention” and a “sixth invention”. The Examiner further states that “[i]f these are not 6 inventions, but rather six features of an invention, then the wording should be appropriately changed.

Applicant has amended the Specification as suggested by the Examiner. That is, for example, the Specification has been amended to replace the phrase “A first invention provides” with the phrase “A first aspect of the present invention provides”.

These amendments to the Specification are reflected in the attached Substitute Specification.

III. OBJECTION TO THE SPECIFICATION

The Examiner has objected to the specification under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, because the specification is allegedly replete with terms that are not clear, concise and exact. Additionally, the Examiner has requested a Substitute Specification including all of the previous Amendments to the Specification as well as any further amendments to the Specification.

Applicant has filed herewith a Substitute Specification (both a marked-up copy and a clean copy) as requested by the Examiner. No new matter has been added.

Regarding the “large diameter portion”, Applicant points out that this feature is now referred to in Figure 1, as provided in the Amendments to the Drawings.

The Substitute Specification provides the Specification relative to the immediate prior

version of the Specification of record (i.e., the Specification in accordance with the Amendment filed on March 15, 2006.

The Substitute Specification also includes new amendments in response to the Examiner's objections to the Specification. These new amendments are shown with markings in the marked-up version of the Substitute Specification.

IV. OBJECTION TO THE DRAWINGS

The Examiner has objected to the drawings for not showing every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Specifically, the Examiner alleges that the large-diameter portion of the flange portion must be shown or canceled from the claims.

Applicant has amended Figure 1 to specifically point out this feature of the claimed invention.

V. 35 U.S.C. § 112, SECOND PARAGRAPH, REJECTION

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Although Applicant disagrees with the Examiner's determination of indefiniteness, merely in an effort to speed prosecution, Applicant has amended the claims to more particularly define the claimed invention.

However, regarding claim 1, Applicant submits that the Examiner has misunderstood the claimed invention. That is, the Examiner states that "it appears to examiner in the figures that only on of the engagement surface or lock surface can engage the engagement portion at any position or state" (see Office Action dated June 21, 2006 at page 6).

Applicant submits that the claim language of claim 1 does not dispute the Examiner's assertion. That is, the claim language merely recites that the engagement surface and the lock surface are engageable with the engagement portion. The claim language does not require that the lock surface and the engagement surface be engaged to the engagement portion at the

same time. Indeed, (as further recited in the dependents claims) the Specification discloses that when the engagement portion engages the engagement surface the pin is removable from the insertion hole. When the engagement portion is engaged with the lock surface, the engagement portion moves along the lock surface while maintaining an opened state of the leg portion of the grommet (e.g., see Application at pages 9-13).

Thus, the claim language of claim 1 is clearly not indefinite.

Regarding claim 9, Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite, inter alia, “*said insertion hole comprising: a large diameter portion formed at an upper end of said insertion hole adjacent to said flange; and a small diameter portion formed adjacent to a bottom portion of said large diameter portion*”. The large diameter portion and the small diameter portion are illustrated in amendment Figure 1 and labeled as 7a and 7b, respectively.

Regarding the rib walls, Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite, inter alia, “*a plurality of rib walls formed on an outer periphery of said shaft portion, said plurality of rib walls engaging said plurality of slits*”. Therefore, the claimed invention recites that the rib walls are formed on the pin while the slits are formed on the grommet.

Regarding the projection (e.g., 11) of the claimed invention, the Examiner has misunderstood the claimed invention. That is, as shown in Figure 4, the projection (e.g., 11) is clearly depicted as a projection that extends from the flange (e.g., 3). As shown in Figure 1, the projection (e.g., 11) is formed at a top portion of the slits (e.g., 8). Therefore, this feature of the claimed invention is clearly not indefinite.

Furthermore, Applicant has reviewed dependent claims 2-8 and 10-20 and has made any necessary claim amendments.

Therefore, Applicant submits that the claim amendments overcome the Examiner’s rejection and the Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

VI. RELATED ART REFERENCES

A. The Ueno, Pliml and Anderson References

Claims 1-8, 12-14 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ueno, Pliml or Anderson. Furthermore, claims 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ueno, Pliml or Anderson. Applicant submits, however, that there are elements of the claimed invention which are neither taught nor suggested by Ueno, Pliml or Anderson.

That is, neither Ueno, Pliml or Anderson teaches or suggests “*a plurality of rib walls formed on an outer periphery of said shaft portion, said plurality of rib walls engaging said plurality of slits*”, as recited in claim 1.

The Examiner attempts to rely on Figures 5, 23 and 3 of Ueno, Pliml and Anderson, respectively to support her allegations. The Examiner, however, is clearly incorrect.

That is, nowhere in these figures (nor anywhere else for that matter) does Ueno, Pliml or Anderson teach or suggest a jointing member including a plurality of rib walls formed on an outer periphery of the shaft portion, the plurality of rib walls engaging the plurality of slits. Indeed, the Examiner does not even allege that Ueno, Pliml or Anderson teaches or suggests this feature.

The claimed invention provides a plurality of rib walls (12) disposed on the shaft portion (6) of the pin (2) for engaging a plurality of slits (8) disposed on the leg portion (4) of the grommet (1) (e.g., see Application at Figure 1).

This feature is clearly not taught or suggested by Ueno, Pliml or Anderson. As shown in Figures 5, 23 and 3 of Ueno, Pliml or Anderson, respectively, there are no rib walls formed on the shaft of the male member.

Therefore, Applicant submits that there are elements of the claimed invention that are not taught or suggested, nor made obvious, by Ueno, Pliml or Anderson. Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

B. The LeVey Reference

Claims 1-8, 12-14 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by LeVey. Furthermore, claims 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over LeVey. Applicant submits, however, that there are elements of the claimed invention which are neither taught nor suggested by LeVey.

That is, LeVey does not teach or suggest “*a plurality of rib walls formed on an outer periphery of said shaft portion, said plurality of rib walls engaging said plurality of slits*”, as recited in claim 1.

The Examiner attempts to rely on Figures 9 and 10 of LeVey to support her allegations. The Examiner, however, is clearly incorrect.

That is, nowhere in these figures (nor anywhere else for that matter) does LeVey teach or suggest a jointing member including a plurality of rib walls formed on an outer periphery of the shaft portion, the plurality of rib walls engaging the plurality of slits. Indeed, the Examiner does not even allege that LeVey teaches or suggests this feature.

The claimed invention provides a plurality of rib walls (12) disposed on the shaft portion (6) of the pin (2) for engaging a plurality of slits (8) disposed on the leg portion (4) of the grommet (1) (e.g., see Application at Figure 1).

This feature is clearly not taught or suggested by LeVey. As shown in Figure 9 of LeVey there are no rib walls formed on the shaft of the pin (12).

Therefore, Applicant submits that there are elements of the claimed invention that are not taught or suggested, nor made obvious, by LeVey. Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

VII. FORMAL MATTERS AND CONCLUSION

Applicant submits (as detailed above) that the Specification and Drawings have been amended in a manner that is fully responsive to the Examiner's objections.

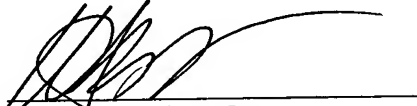
In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1-12, 14-17 and 19-21, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,

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FIG. 1

